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external conditions of life and the internal conditions of thought. To maintain that equilibrium in so far as we can—that is wisdom! This wisdom has been called the act of being happy; I prefer to regard happiness as a virtue.

Happiness—difficult to achieve, difficult to retain—is it not really an egoistic benefit? While being happy through those who love us, we help the latter to their own happiness. Wisdom commands optimism, which is at once the art of adapting oneself to the actual conditions of life and a very powerful means to produce better conditions. Optimism is significant like pessimism; it reveals the healthiness of the spirit as pessimism betrays its disease. Like it, optimism is communicative, it has the same contagious sympathy. Too fragile to permit philosophy to place in it the goal of

human energy, happiness—or rather the habit of happiness—is one of the agents of the æsthetic ideal; morality may count it among the virtues.²⁷

Note 27.—People may ask concerning happiness, is it decidedly a result or a virtue? Choose, then!—Why? If happiness is the result of an equilibrium, this equilibrium depends on a habit, which, besides, it contributes to create: that same habit, behold in it virtue!—You will not contest the adage that makes happiness consist in opinion? The opinion of happiness may become a habit—there is virtue again!

I know well that strictly speaking it is the term optimism that is proper to that habit of the spirit and will; but it is such a fine word, this word optimism! and so precious and dear to men that I have not the courage to adopt another for it, in order to designate that exquisite virtue, the clemency of which knows how to preserve our joys and respect the joys of others.—A smile is a virtue and likewise is graciousness.

To be continued.

OLD WELLS

[Do not fill up old wells—*Proverb*]

*Though you forget to love,
Love is a living thing....
An ill unmeasured comes
If you choke up the spring.*

They sent me on a day
To fill an ancient well:
If there had been a house
None now remained to tell.

But all amid the grass
I found a myrtle spray
And a bitter scent of box
Rose up along the way.

A well—without a sweep
Nor was there left a curb;
A warped plank lay across
Half hid in struggling herb.

Deep down the water gleamed
A buried pane of blue
That cracked athwart like glass.
At the first earth I threw,

And the first earth I threw—
It had the grave-clod's sound
And something seemed alive
That cried far underground!

But I began to sing
My gloomy thoughts to save;
The song became the croon
Of one who digs a grave.

I bent me to my task,
I hurled the brown earth in—
But suddenly around
There was a murmured din!

I lifted up mine eyes,
The heart within me sunk—
For They all stood round about
Who ever there had drunk!

With asking looks They leaned
"Give us to drink—we thirst!"
And then I learned that he
Who fills a well is cursed.

They were—and were not—ay,
They vanished as They came
As though the noon should drop
Upon a candle-flame.

*Sweet, though you love no more,
Do not quite close your heart,
So that no place is mine,
Lest Ghosts of Memory start.*

Edith M. Thomas